

Medway Youth Justice Plan 2022-24



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Foreword

Giving every child the best opportunity to achieve their potential in life, is the key priority for Medway Council. We know that if we are to create an environment that enables our children and young people to flourish, we must deal with the wider societal issues that can impact on their wellbeing.

The Medway Youth Justice Partnership Strategic Plan sets out our ambition to move 'upstream' and bring together all available resources to support children, young people and families that come into contact with our services.

Our vision is one of prevention and protecting the public. We will work collaboratively as a system, to engage earlier and support our young people to reduce the risks and likelihood of them becoming involved in the criminal justice system. For those who unfortunately commit crimes, we will develop bespoke solutions, tailored to their needs. This will enable them to make different choices and not reoffend.

This Youth Justice Plan is ambitious, young person centred and evidence based. Key to the delivery of our plan is the strength of our local partnership and the quality of the services we commission and provide. We have some of the best people and services to support young people in the Country within Medway.

As chair of the Medway Youth Justice Partnership, I commend all partners for their contributions in helping to develop and shape this plan. I hope readers will recognise the commitment we have set out as partnership to protect the public and our local communities. We balance this with the need to prevent crime and support our children. Young people and families who are in contact with our services will be given the opportunity to achieve their full potential in life.

James Williams Director of Public Health

Chair of Medway Youth Justice Partnership Board

Introduction:

Our Vision:

Medway Youth Offending Team aims to achieve the best for the children and young people that we work with.

We aim to get the best out of young people and for them to be able to contribute positively to the community.

We aim to provide opportunities for young people to find the best in themselves.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, requires Local Authorities to have a Youth Justice Plan which is annually updated to set out how youth justice will be delivered locally within available resources. This Plan will cover a 3-year period from 2022–2024.

The principle aims of the Youth Justice system are,

- Prevent Youth Crime
- Reduce Re-offending
- Safeguard young people from harm
- Protect the public from harm

This plan seeks to deliver these aims through the application of the ‘Child First’ principle.

Put simply it is the approach of this plan to work with children who come into contact with the Youth Justice System as children first and offenders second. As a means of introducing the Youth Justice Strategy and its priorities it is useful to start with a brief overview of how the strategy will seek to deliver the four Child First principles (as presented in the 2019 National Standards for Youth Justice Services).

1. Prioritise the best interests of children, recognising their needs, capacities, rights, and potential.

The priorities presented in this strategy have been chosen to prioritise the best interests of children, to identify their capacities and potential to contribute to their own positive development and that of the wider community.

2. Build on children’s individual strengths and capabilities as a means of developing a pro-social identity for sustainable desistance from crime. This leads to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.

The strategy represents a shift from an individual ‘casework’ approach to working with children. Particularly the plan looks towards utilising resources in the young

person's family and community focusing on enabling them to make a positive contribution to society.

3. Encourage children's active participation, engagement, and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their Carers.

The themes of participation and collaboration are central to this strategy. The strategy itself has been developed from a collaboration with children. Over 50 of the comments and suggestions made by young people in the consultation have been directly incorporated into this strategy. The strategy seeks to build a platform which places collaboration with young people central to delivery and service development. The result of this collaboration is that the plan has a more operational slant to it than previous plans have had, in that the distance between the concerns of young people and the actions included in the plan have necessarily been reduced. Engagement / collaborative events has also taken place with staff, councillors, and the Youth Justice Partnership Board members, encouraging them all to contribute ideas and expert knowledge to the plan. A professional collaboration has taken place with Essex Youth Offending Service and this plan incorporates all 13 recommendations made in recent review of Medway YOT by Essex in August 2021.

4. Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using prevention, diversion, and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

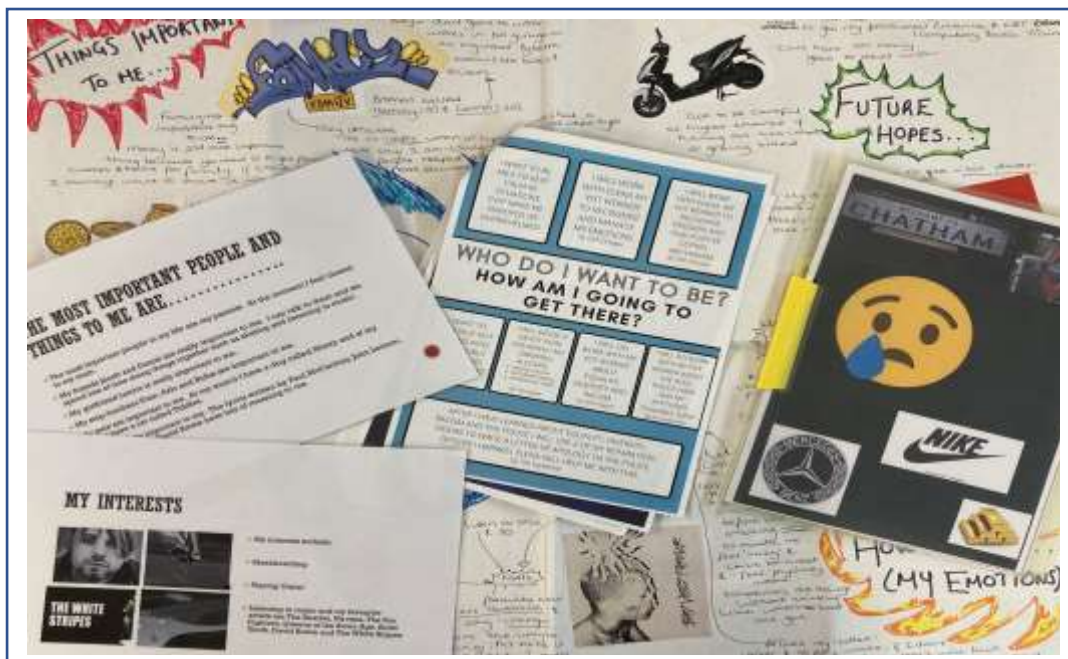
Prevention and diversionary activity feature strongly in the plan. Historically 'Prevention' work has been underdeveloped in the work of the partnership. The Youth Offending Team has predominantly worked with young people already identified as being involved in offending having been referred by either the police or the youth court. This plan reflects a determination to reach out past these traditional referral routes to identify and identify and work with children who are considered as being at risk of offending and to prevent them coming into the justice system from the outset.

In this strategy the terms child and young person are used. The term child is used in accordance with the child first principle to acknowledge that the youth offending team is in fact working with children and should work with them as children. The term child acknowledges the respective rights of children and responsibilities that the adult world has towards them. During the consultation period, it was apparent that the children for whom the plan is written referred to themselves as young people and wanted the Youth Offending Team to refer to them in that way. The terms young people and young person are used to operationalise the strategy so that it is acceptable to those to whom it refers.

Achievements

To date the Youth Justice Partnership has supported the Youth Offending Team to be aspirational, creative, and innovative in its practice with Children. This plan builds upon the prior achievements of the Youth Offending Team particularly in the areas of Child First / and Identity based practice, Relationship based practice, and strengths-based practice.

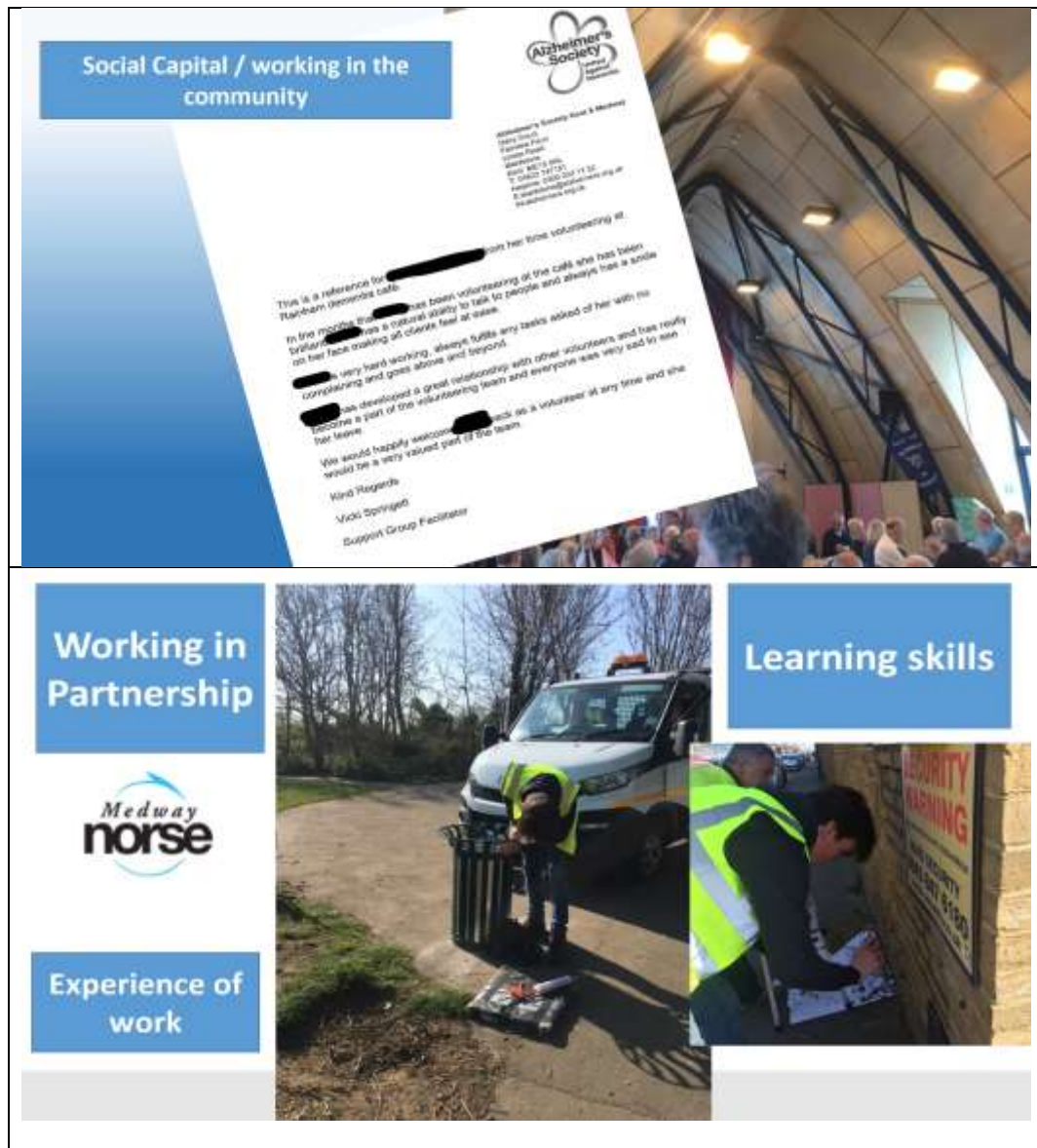
Child First / and identity-based practice: An example of this creativity and innovation is the **Child First** approach to planning with young people that has been developed in the team. In response to the 'Beyond Youth Custody' research undertaken by NACRO which highlighted the importance of addressing the theme of identity with children when engaging them in the process of change, Medway YOT has developed an approach to planning with children that effectively works with them towards the realisation of a positive future identity. This has been a bold and innovative approach which eschews templates and formulaic approaches to planning in favour of an entirely individualised approach, in which the worker and the child explore the questions, 'Who am I?', 'Who do I want to be?' and 'How am I going to get there'. Below are some examples of these plans, evidencing the individualised nature of these plans, which are centred on the young person's perception of their own identity journey.



In 2020 the Youth Offending Team was given a Pathfinder grant from the National Youth Justice Board to develop a digital tool to facilitate this planning process with both children in the community and in custody. The aim of the pathfinder project is to produce a tool that will be able to be used by Youth Offending Teams across the country. The Pathfinder projects reflects the YOTs bold aspiration to be sector leaders in developing Youth Justice Practice.

Relationship based practice: This project is only one aspect of the team's passion and commitment to working positively with children in a **Relationship** based approach. Relationship based meaning that there is an organisational recognition that the trusting relationship that the young person has with their worker is the foundation for developing and encouraging motivation and change, and therefore

effective risk reduction. Successive inspections and reviews have commented and observed the staff team's passion and commitment to the young people with whom they work. Throughout 2020 and 2021 staff retention in the team has been good, allowing a relationship-based approach to practice to be actively fostered and developed.



Strengths based practice: The Youth Offending Team has sought to identify the strengths of children and develop opportunities to utilise these for the benefit of the children themselves and the community. Reparation projects have been sought that enable young people to develop their skills and strengths as well as making a direct contribution to the community. Again, this has been a bold approach as we have sought opportunities for children to make a direct contribution through work with vulnerable members of the community. Doing this has required a long-term building

of trust with several voluntary organisations to encourage them to work with children referred by the Youth Offending Team. The Youth Offending Team has also fostered partnership arrangements with a major local business, Medway Norse, which undertakes building and facilities management across the local authority area. Through this partnership children have through their experience of work with the Youth Offending Team been able to gain valuable experiences in which they have gained skills and increased in self-esteem and confidence. The next step for the team is to put in place a process by which children gain formal accreditation for the work that they undertake with the team.

Building upon these achievements, the following priorities have been developed for the 2022-24 plan.

1. Support young people to realise a positive identity. Strengthen and Build Bonds, Bridges and Links between young people and the community.
2. Work with young people and partners to create a safer community for Medway.
3. Keep Young People Safe and enable them to thrive.
4. Prevent Young people from entering the Youth Justice System.

The wording of these priorities emphasises the aspiration to deliver the child first principle, emphasising positive identities, strengths, collaboration and working with young people, whilst incorporating a focus on local issues.

These priorities are aligned in spirit and intention to those in the Medway People Strategy, 2021-2025, 'Supporting Medway's people to realise their potential'.

- Children in Medway will have the best start in life
- Children and young people in Medway will develop well
- People in Medway contribute to their community and have a meaningful say in decisions and services that shape their lives

And particularly the following activities described in the People Strategy, the strengths-based approach to children is mirrored in both strategies.

'Support good mental health, emotional wellbeing and resilience for children and young people, from pre-school right through to young adulthood'.

'Children and young people will have clear pathways and smooth transitions between education, health and social care settings by effective partnership working. Their preparation for adulthood will be built on their strengths, thus enabling them to have an independent life as possible'.

Governance:

This section outlines the partnership and overall governance arrangements for the Youth Offending Team.



The above diagram details the membership of the Youth Justice Partnership Board (YJPB).

The YJPB retains a clear focus on the principal aim of reducing offending and re-offending and maintains strategic oversight of the delivery and performance of the local youth justice system. The membership of the board provides senior representation from key partners to ensure that young people involved in the youth justice system have access to universal and specialist services delivered by partners and other key agencies.

The partnership board has the responsibility of ensuring that the YOT has access to the minimum partnership resources, of Police, health, education, social work, and probation. The board aims to be fully engaged in the practice of the Youth Offending Team and to strive for excellence and proactively work as a partnership to address and anticipate the needs of children in medway involved in the Youth Justice System.

The YJPB membership provides alignment with other key partnership boards addressing the Youth Justice agenda, Kent Criminal Justice Board, Kent and Medway Reoffending Board, Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP), MAPPA Strategic Management Board. With its being brought into Children's

Services the Youth Offending Team is represented at Children's services management and senior management meetings.

To drive forward partnership engagement in strategic and practice improvement, several themes have been identified that reach across the priorities. These themes will inform the partnership board agenda for the period of the plan, being reviewed over the successive years to ensure progress in delivery (2022-24).

Theme:	Improvement agenda: Suggested items-	Partnership Board:
Child First.	Developing child first practice, Pathfinder project, Collaboration with children, Development of opportunities for young people in the community, accreditation, ETE.	January.
Partnerships, collaboration, and resourcing.	Review of partnership contribution to the Youth Offending Team, Needs analysis and sufficiency of resources, collaborative working (within children's services and partner agencies). Adolescent offer.	April.
Quality of Practice.	Quality assurance, Audit findings, Implementation of learning from audit and review, Improvement journey.	July.
Prevention, Diversion and first responses.	Diversionary activities across the partnership, The Youth Offending Teams delivery of prevention work. Out of court disposal process. Data analysis of local offending and local police / court outcomes.	October.

Resources and services:

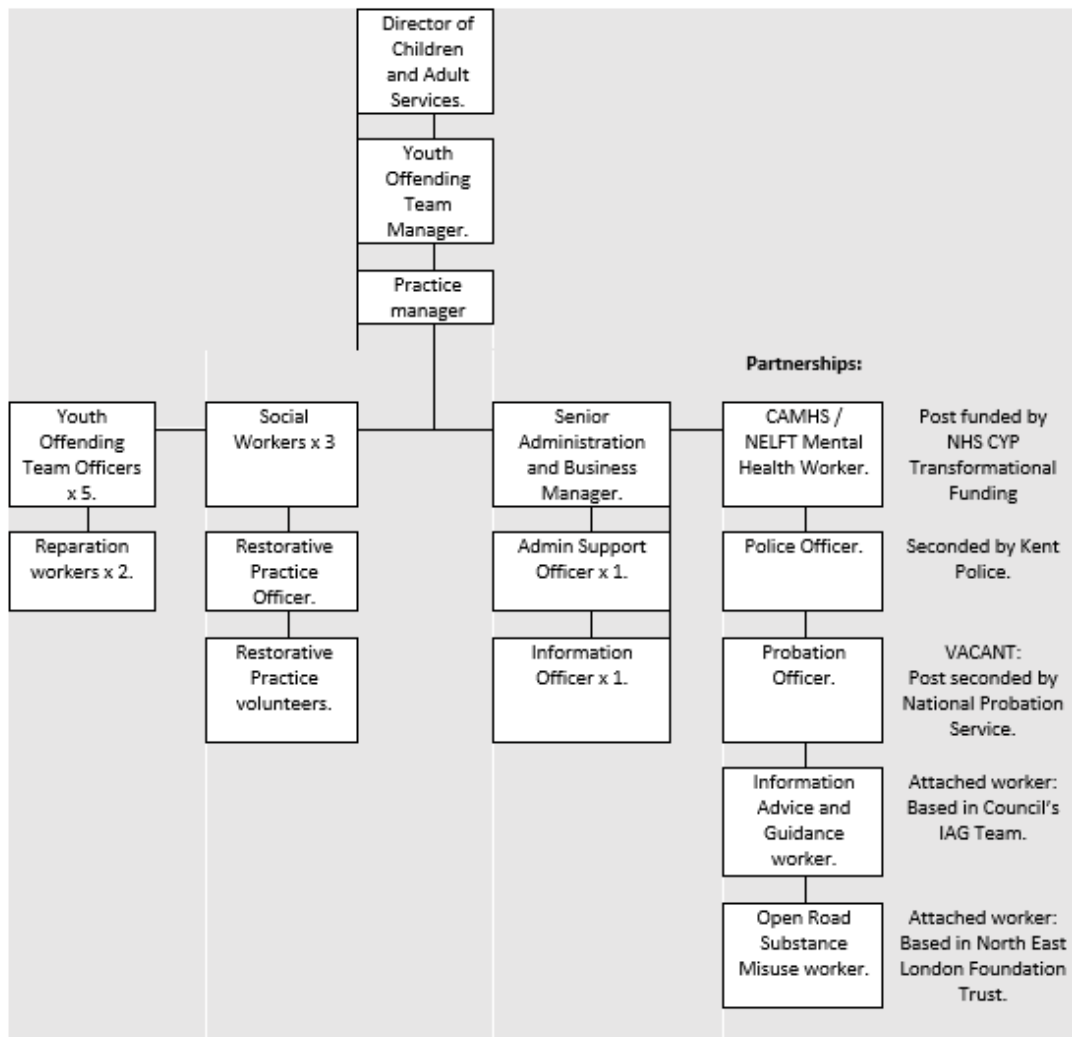
This section details the resourcing of the Youth Offending Team and outlines the use of these resources.

The Youth Offending Team is funded from the sources listed below.

Contributing source:	Amount:
Youth Justice Board	£338,441
Local Authority	£332,628
OPCC (Office Police Crime Commissioner) /	£90,353
Probation	£2,500
Total=	£763,922

Youth Justice Pathfinder funding £170,000 for the period 2020-2023. During the period of this plan the Pathfinder project funding will be £50,000.

Below is a structure chart detailing the staffing and specialist resources available within the Youth Offending Team.



The vision of this strategy is to orientate the work of the Youth Offending Team to delivering the Child First principle. Key to this is ensuring that the team is staffed sufficiently to enable practitioners to carry out high quality relationship-based practice, within the National Standards set out by the Youth Justice Board.

We will use our grant, partner contributions and available resources to deliver the outcomes presented on page 23. These outcomes present a change in activities, moving towards developing prevention pathways and the development of community-based work developing the strengths of the children working with the Youth Offending Team. Our performance will be improved in 2022/24 through the delivery of a decisively more strengths-based approach. Qualitative performance measures will be developed alongside the quantitative ones, as the aim of the strategy is to develop the type / kind of experience that children have when working with the Youth Offending Team. As the young person's consultation shows (appendix b) children greatly value their experience of working with the Youth Offending Team, in terms of the safe space it provides for them to express themselves and discuss matters important to them. Qualitative performance measures would seek to establish how through working with the team children's sense of self-esteem, value, connectedness to their communities and self-efficacy are increased.

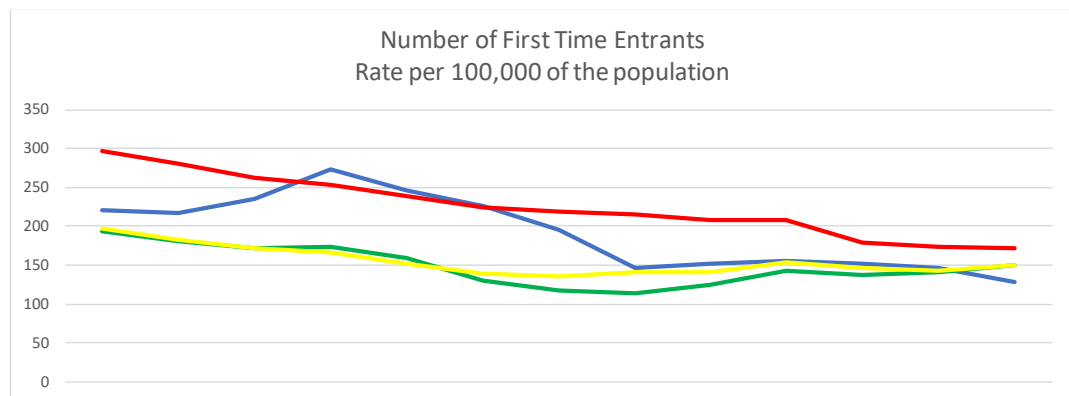
Developing this approach within existing resources will necessitate looking afresh at the current roles and responsibilities of the Social Worker and YOT Officer posts. Developing some of these posts to push forward this strengths-based approach.

Performance and priorities:

This section outlines the Youth Offending Teams performance in respect to the three national priorities of the Youth Justice System of 1: Reducing First Time entrants. 2: Reducing the Reoffending of Children already in the Youth Justice System. 3: Reducing the numbers of children in custody. Local data is then presented, and an analysis provided of how this data informs the plan and the priorities.

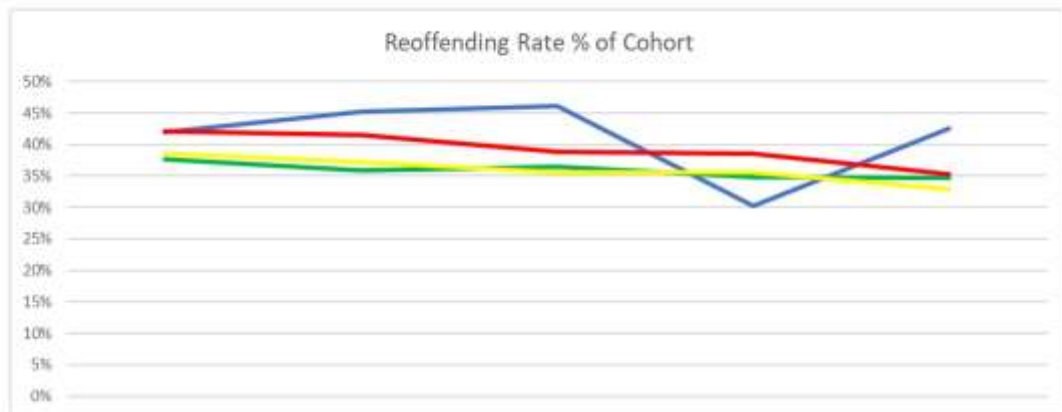
First Time Entrants

First Time Entrants are young people who receive a youth caution or court conviction for the first time within the period. The data for this indicator comes from the Police National Computer (PNC), is published by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and forms part of the YJB's YOT data summary. The data is collected in rolling 12-month periods to March, July, September, and December of each year.



Reoffending

The data for this indicator comes from the Police National Computer and is published by the MoJ. The 12 months % of the cohort that reoffended is presented, this is the latest available data. The cohort consists of all children and young people who received a pre-court or court disposal or were released from custody in that date range.



	Oct 14 - Sep 15	Oct 15 - Sep 16	Oct 16 - Sep 17	Oct 17 - Sep 18	Oct 18 - Sep 19
Medway	42%	45%	46%	30%	43%
Kent	38%	36%	37%	35%	35%
South East	38%	37%	36%	36%	33%
England	42%	42%	39%	38%	35%

Reoffending rates after 12 months - Three month cohorts

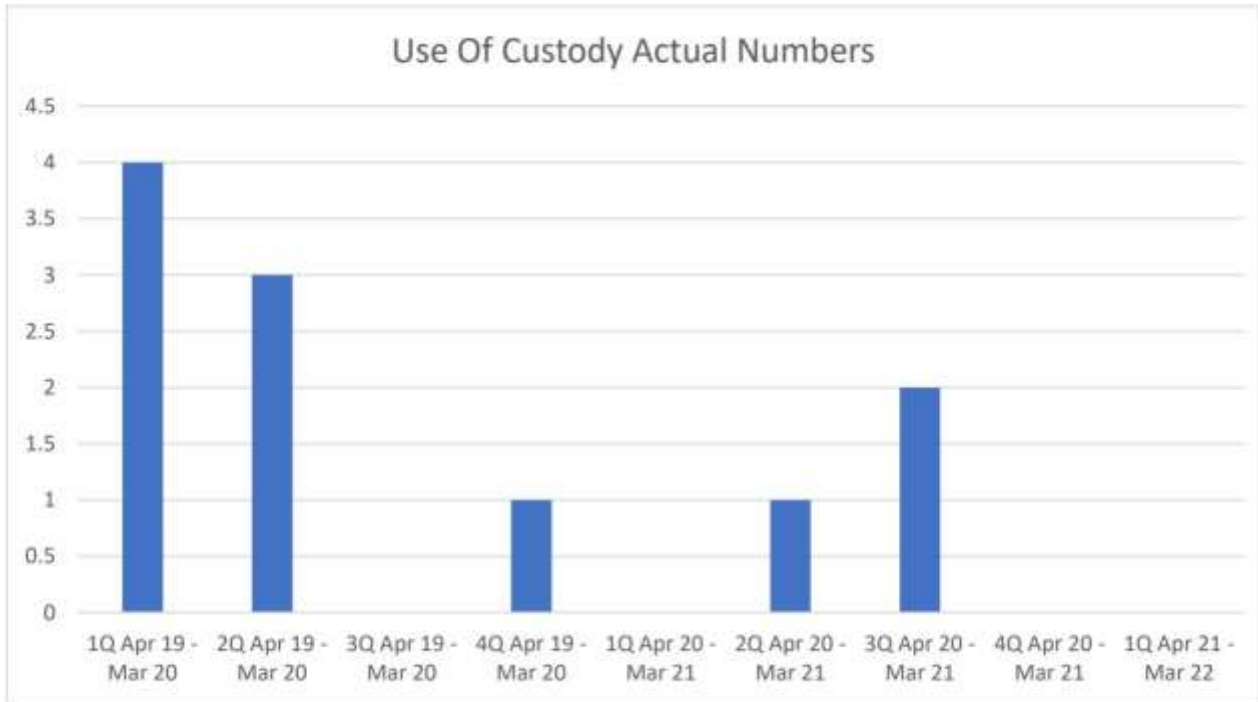
Reoffences per reoffender Jul 19- Sept 19 cohort (latest period)	4.8	3.39	3.77
Reoffences per reoffender Jan 19- Mar 19 cohort (base line)	3.56	3.73	3.89
percent change from selected baseline	35.00%	-9%	-3.00%

Reoffending rates after 12 months - Yearly cohorts

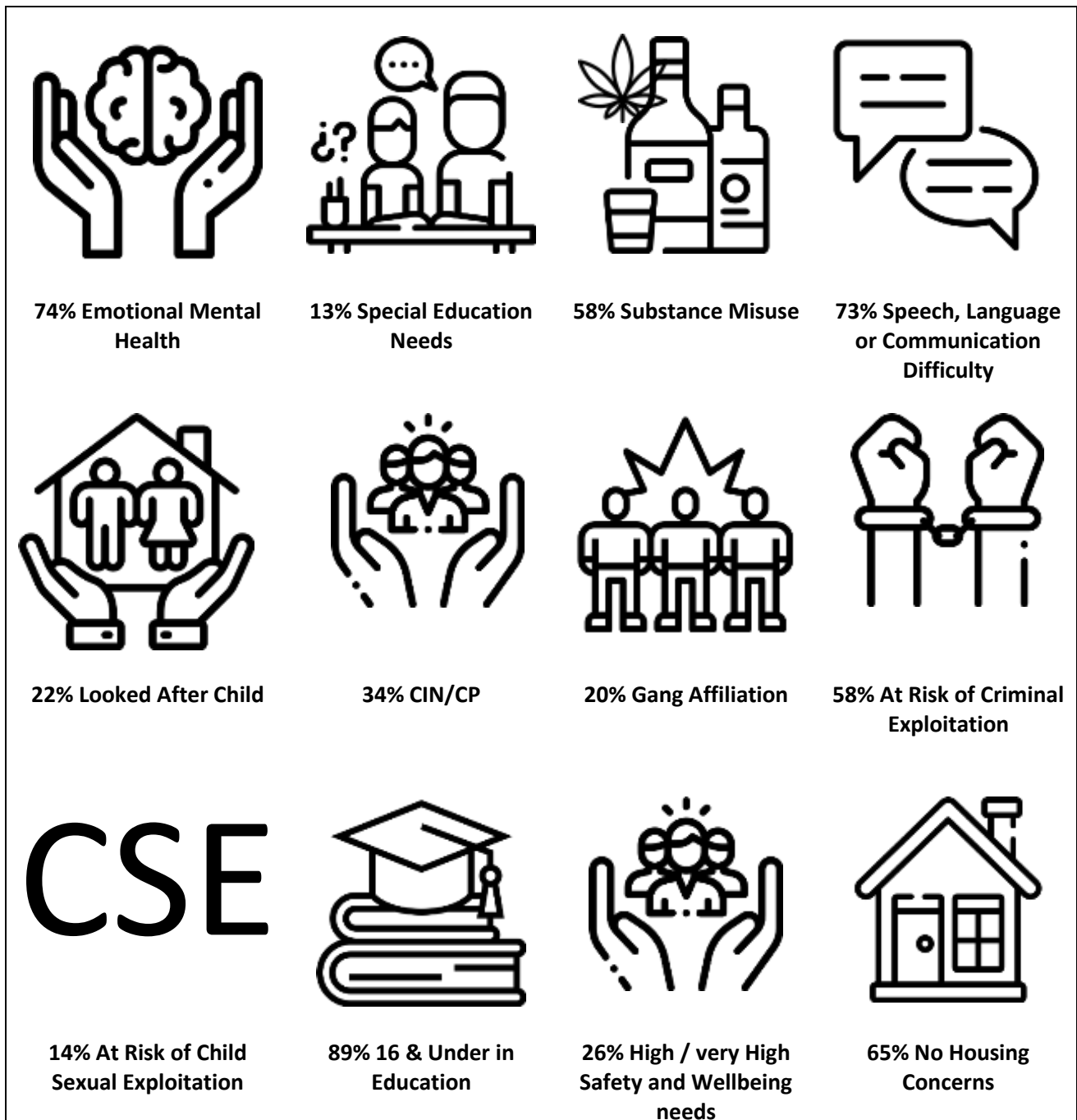
Reoffences per reoffender Oct 18 - Sept 19 cohort (latest period)	3.49	3.52	3.8
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Use of Custody

There were 8 custodial sentences for 2019-2020, 3 for 2020-2021, for 1Q of 2021 no YP has been detained in custody. For 2020-2021 Medway is for the first time below the family average for over 2 years. At the point of writing Medway has no young people in custody. It is likely that we will record no young people in custody for Q2 and Q3 of this year.



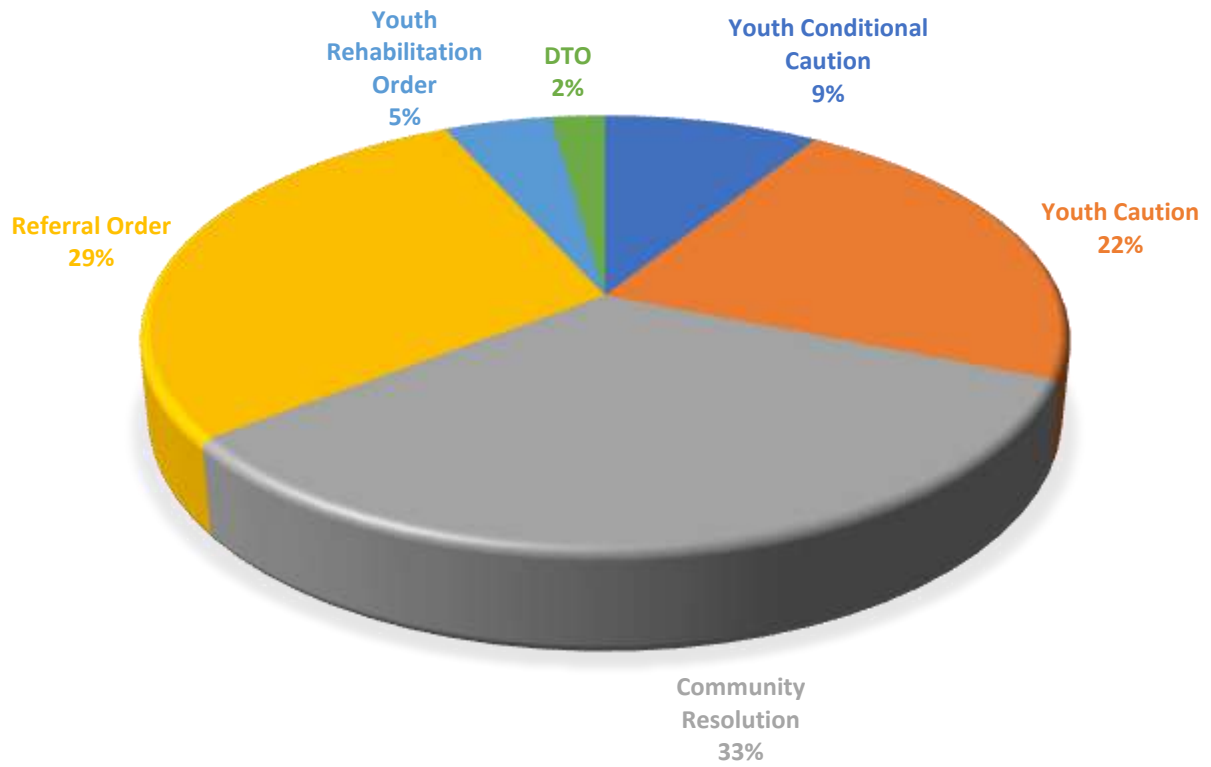
Our Children:



This data was taken from Q1 and Q2 2021 (April-Sept). The following data items were taken from the Asset Plus completions during that period, Emotional Mental Health, Speech, Language or Communication Difficulty, Substance Misuse, Gang Affiliation, Criminal Exploitation, Sexual Exploitation, and housing concerns. These are assessments of risk and needs, a % of young people at risk of criminal exploitation rather than a statement identifying the actual numbers of young people subject to criminal exploitation. Yearly revisions to this plan will update this data set.

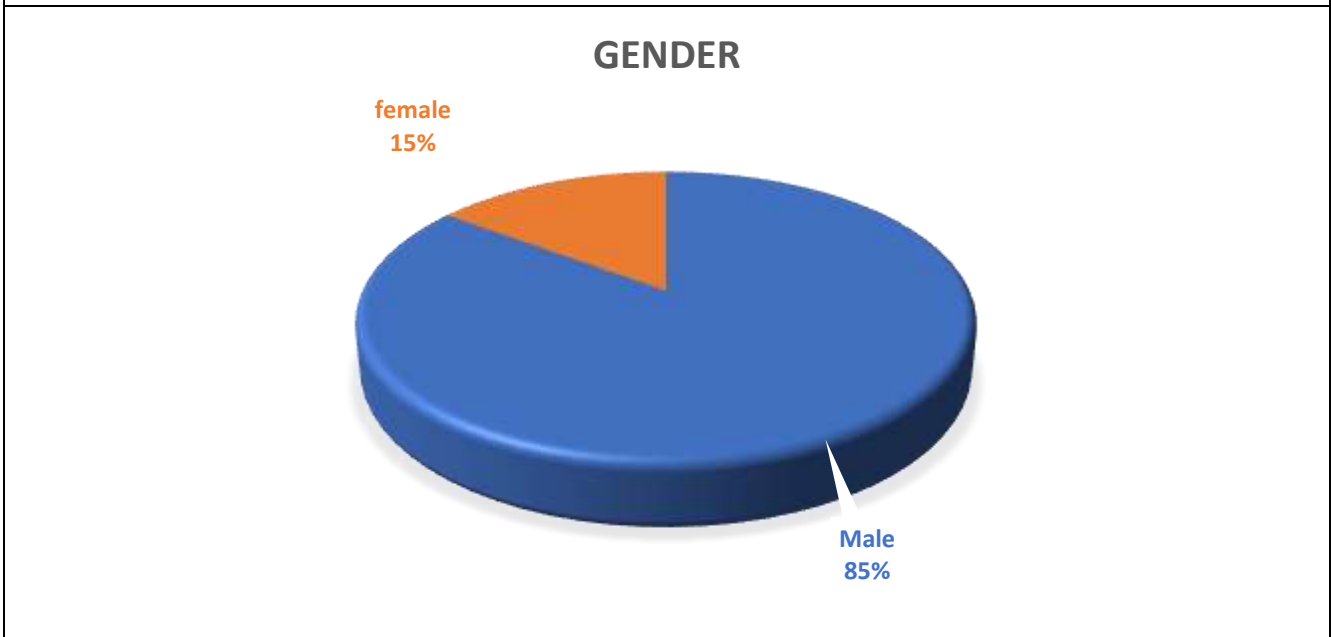
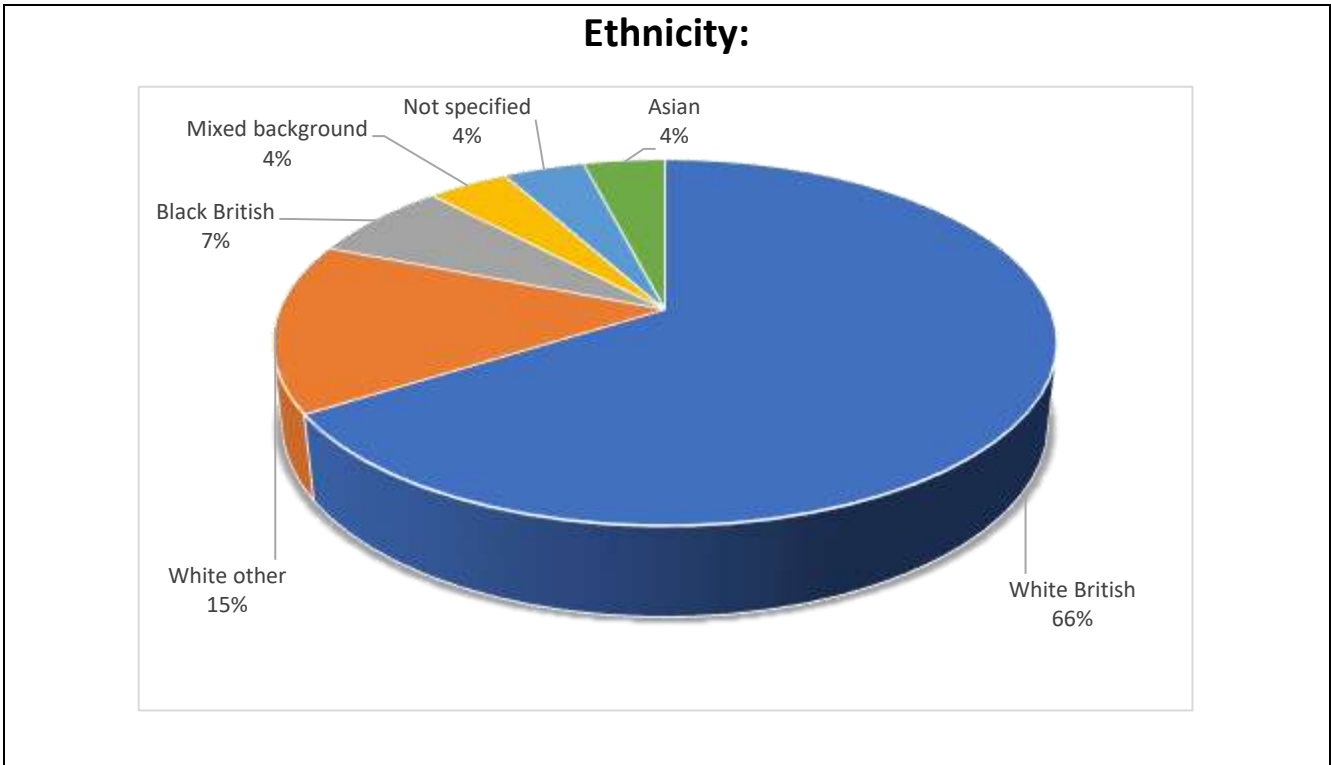
Intervention Types:

This data was taken from Q1 and Q2 2021 (April-Sept).



Diversity:

This data was taken from Q1 and Q2 2021 (April-Sept).



Ethnic classifications:

The Youth Offending Team records a diverse set of ethnic classifications, with separate designations being used by the police and recorded on the Asset Plus assessment framework used by the Youth Offending Team. To attain statistical significance separate classifications have been brought together under the above designations.

LGBT +:

LGBT + identifying data is not recorded either by the Police or Youth Justice Services.

What is our data telling us?**First time entrants:**

The data in respect to first time entrants is positive, with a recent reduction in comparison with both regional and national figures.

Re-offending:

The local data regarding re-offending presents a mixed picture that requires explanation.

The Ministry of Justice changed the methodology for measuring reoffending in October 2017 to align the measure with that used for adult reoffending. Under the new methodology, a 3-month cohort rather than a 12-month cohort is used. The cohort is still tracked over 12 months.

The Medway data reports a 35% increase from the baseline. This is in part explained by the original baseline being lower than both the South East & England average. The overall yearly reoffending rate is again lower than both the South East & England. On account of the YJB not providing us with identifying data we cannot readily identify the reason for the anomaly represented in the increase in the 3-month compared to the yearly cohort. In the 3-month cohort (July - Sept 19). There were 5 offenders who committed 24 offences, average of 4.8 per offender. The previous quarter there were 9 offenders who committed 23 offences providing a reoffending rate of 3.56. So, whilst there was an increase from the Jan - Mar 19 baseline, the actual number of offenders and offences decreased.

Use of Custody:

Custody levels are currently low. This reduced use of custody can be seen in the context of an overall reduction of sentencing in the youth court. More positively it can also be seen as the YOT's successfully diverting the court from the use of custody

by proposing viable and convincing alternatives using specific intervention packages, tailored to the child's needs, based on detailed assessments of each child.

Our Children:

The selection of data presented in this strategy identifying the needs of the children open to the YOT, highlight the need for an effective multi agency partnership. Immediately it can be seen that the YOT cohort have complex multiple needs.

Current partnership arrangements and resources address some of these needs such as Emotional and Mental Health and Substance Misuse, directly and effectively, with the resource of a CAMHS worker in the team and access to a specialist substance misuse resource. Although currently there is no specialist resource available to the team to address the high percentage of young people assessed as having Speech, Language or Communication difficulties.

This data identifies the number of children open to the Youth Offending Team who are also open to other parts of children's services. The emphasis in this plan of developing closer more co-ordinated working practices within children's services is a necessary response to this data.

Gang affiliation and exploitation are both prominent in this data. These are complex issues that require a multi-agency response. There are also issues that evidence supports a contextual safeguarding response rather than an individualised response to effectively address. A strong theme in this plan is seeking to access family and community resources to support children desist from further offending.

Intervention Types:

The nature of the service is determined by the type of intervention it is being asked to deliver by both the Police and the Youth Court. Data shows that in quarters 1 and 2 (2021) many referrals now come to the Youth Offending Team from the Police in the **form** of Out of Court Disposals (OOCs), 64%. 55% of children who are referred to the team were referred as either Youth Cautions or Community Resolutions. Whilst there is a statutory responsibility on the part of the local authority to provide interventions to these children, their actual participation in these interventions is voluntary.

This plan's aspiration to develop a child first approach to youth justice practice is supported by the increasing use of OOCs. These Children engage with the Youth Offending Team primarily because they want to. The emphasis on relationship-based practice is important to secure the voluntary engagement of these children. The increased use of OOCs has required the Youth Offending Team's resources to be both flexible and adaptable, delivering both diversionary interventions to young people referred to on Community Resolutions (the lowest level of intervention, considered diversionary in that the outcome is not recorded on the Police National

Computer), and interventions that contain legal restrictions on the child's behaviour such as through electronic monitoring on an intensive Youth Rehabilitation Order.

Diversity:

The data presented in relation to ethnicity is a combined from Court and Out of Court data. In respect to the theme of the disproportionate numbers of Black young people represented in the Youth Justice System, local data at first sight compares favourably to the picture (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/ethnicity-and-the-criminal-justice-system-statistics-2020>)

However local data from the schools' census 2019, does indicate that the proportion of Black young people open to the Youth Offending Team is higher than that in the local school population (Data from the 2019 school census shows that 80.2% of pupils in Medway are classified as white, with mixed ethnic origin being the second largest ethnic group (6.9%)).

Similarly in respect to gender it is not possible to compare the number of girls involved in the combined numbers of Out of Court Disposals and Court Orders with the national picture, as national statistics are not recorded in this way. The latest statistics in relation to gender show that nationally in 2019 13% of convictions of children were of girls.

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938360/statistics-on-women-and-the-criminal-justice-system-2019.pdf)

In Medway of the 35 court cases open to the Youth Offending Team in 2021 only 2 were girls (5%).

The strong emphasis placed in the team in respect to exploring with children the theme of identity means that the team is responsive and alert to diversity needs and considerations, including Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality. This focus on identity facilitates practitioners being able to identify diversity needs and be responsive to them. Children from backgrounds who are more likely to experience disadvantage or discrimination are identified and plans are put in place that are responsive to these experiences of inequality.

Local Performance Measures:

<p>Priority 1: Support young people to realise a positive identity. Strengthen and Build Bonds, Bridges and Links between young people and the community.</p>	<p>Priority 2: Work with young people and partners to create a safer community for Medway.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased young people in education, employment and engaged in positive activities in the community. • The numbers of accredited interventions being completed. • The numbers of young people undertaking reparation / positive activities in the community who are subject to an out of court disposal. • The numbers of young people involved in local community activities. • Clear evidence of the agency of young people and their Carers in both their own plans and in the strategic and developmental plans of the service. • Qualitative measures to developed to explore children's experience of working with the Youth Offending Team, increased self-esteem, value, connectedness to their communities and self-efficacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of a reduction in the risk concerns of children open to the YOT (Asset Plus risk of harm level reduced). • Continued reduction in the use of custody. • A reduction in the seriousness of children's re-offending. • Increase of partnership involvements in management of risk.
<p>Priority 3: Keep Young People Safe and enable them to thrive.</p>	<p>Priority 4: Prevent Young people from entering the Youth Justice System.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of a reduction in the safeguarding concerns of children open to the YOT (Asset Plus Safety and Welling level reduced, Exploitation screening, evidence of YOT contributing to children being 'stepped down' by wider children's services). • Implementation of a new planning process and document to effectively collaborate and share plans with families and support networks. • Evidence of the involvement of children and their families in planning, safeguarding and risk discussions. • Evidence from children's voice- feedback from children and families about their experiences – specifically in relation to their feeling safe. • Improvement in assessed emotional and mental health of children open to the YOT. • The service has appropriate links to specialist services as identified through needs analysis. • Safeguarding Partnership board data set, evidencing the YOTs effective involvement in wider safeguarding processes. Attendance at CIN meetings etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in the number of first-time entrants. • The numbers of siblings who access a prevention intervention. • The numbers of young people accessing the YOT prevention offer, including the number of young people who receive a YOT intervention in conjunction with the police having delivered an Outcome 22.

The performance and delivery of this strategy will be measured using the indicators listed above. Some of these indicators are qualitative, some quantitative and others refer to milestones such as the implementation of processes.

Responding to the pandemic and recovery from COVID-19:

This section explores the challenges of delivering services through the pandemic and what has been learned from this experience.

The Covid 19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of the service. The pandemic continues to affect the way in which interventions are delivered.

Audits of delivery during the first lockdown showed that staff had increased the contact that they had with the children that they worked with. It was evident that staff were motivated to provide additional support to the children who they worked with and who experienced the lockdown as being particularly challenging.

Lessons learnt during the pandemic include:

Overall, the rate of referrals to the YOT decreased during the pandemic. This was in part due to the impact of the pandemic on the court functioning, and at least in the early lockdown on the implications of the lockdown itself on reducing certain types of offending. We did not witness an increase in offending for offences linked to being in the home such as child to parent / carer violence.

The importance of direct face to face meetings with young people: The recognition of relationships as being the primary vehicle for achieving positive change was affirmed during the pandemic. Whilst some young people responded well to contacts via social media platforms such as 'Whats App', generally staff reported using these platforms as being challenging and stifling to engagement. Children presented as wanting to see their worker face to face. Whilst fluent in the use of social media platforms, these platforms presented by children as being reserved for the use of communication with their peers.

The above observation is not to deny the importance of the digital space in working with children. Medway YOT is undertaking a pathfinder project that is specifically exploring how to interact with children in the digital space. Children see the digital space as being theirs and are resistance to 'official' incursions into it. The pathfinder projects acknowledges this and is seeking to develop a space in which children feel is theirs and can communicate to professionals on that space with a sense of equality.

The findings from a survey undertaken in the development stage of the Medway pathfinder project identified the extent to which young people valued the personalised face to face contact that they have with their YOT workers.

Staff felt that children needed more support during the lockdowns, than they would normally. That the lockdowns disproportionately adversely affected their well-being. These observations informed the increase in contacts over and above what would normally be required under National Standards.

Based on this the Youth Offending Team has sought to maintain full access to its office space. In responding to government directives overtime to halt the spread of the pandemic concerning working from home, we have endeavoured to maintain

access for young people and their families to the youth offending team office. The young people's consultation included as an appendix to this strategy highlights how children experience the YOT office space as a 'safe' place that they value having access to.

During the COVID-19 pandemic period, team meetings, and professional meetings have moved on-line, for periods staff from partner agencies rather than working from the YOT office have restricted their activities to their own offices. This has impacted on the multi-agency functionality of the YOT, and the quality of the service delivered to children. We are currently in a process of having to revive this multi-agency functionality. The aspiration to have a 'One stop shop' in which children can attend the office during a specified afternoon in the week and meet the range of the YOT specialist staff and be encouraged to access their services, has been delayed on account of the pandemic. The YOT office is too small to have this number of staff present as well as children and their Carers, whilst maintaining effective social distancing. We are going into 2022 committed to developing strategies to revive the effectiveness of this multi-agency working.

Challenges, risks, and issues:

This section provides and outlines of the current challenges, risks and issues to Youth Justice Services and what actions are being undertaken to address these.

The first two challenges identified in this strategy relate to the Youth Offending Teams capacity to responsive to changing pattern in youth crime. This responsibility is affected in two main ways, firstly lengthy time periods between young people offending and their being referred to the YOT from the Youth Court, and secondly, the numbers of young people who are involved in offending but are not being referred to the Youth Offending Team.

A significant challenge to the main purpose of the Youth Offending Team to prevent young people from offending is the delays experienced locally of a young person being sentenced in the Youth Court. For children long waits in sentencing have a significant impact on the effectiveness of interventions, but simply interventions become less relevant to the young person as the offence for which they are receiving the intervention recedes into their history. Long waits for a young person being sentenced affect the YOT's capacity to be responsive to youth offending. In 2021 the average gap between a young person offending and being sentenced for that offence in the Youth Court is 8 months. Only 13% of young people sentenced in the Youth Court were sentenced in less than 6 months from committing the offence, whereas 40% of young people had waits of over the average of 8 months. To some extent these waits are a result of the impact of the pandemic on the functioning of the court. It will be important for the partnership board to maintain oversight of this issue and monitor progress made.

Local police data strongly indicates that the Youth Offending Team is currently only working with a small percentage of young people involved in actual offending. For a significant proportion of crimes committed by young people there is no actual outcome either in the Youth Court or as an Out of Court Disposal. This applies for offence types across the board including those designated as being serious violence. Locally the most common set of reasons why an offence does not proceed to an outcome is that there are 'evidential difficulties'. This picture is not exceptional to Medway as the Ministry of justice reported that in 2020-2021 (March – March) 40% of all crimes nationally were closed on account of evidential difficulties. In this same period, it is recorded that nationally only 7.3% of all recorded offences resulted in the offender being either charged or receiving a summons (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021>). Government initiatives such as the Violence Reduction Unit seek to respond to youth offending as it is taking place in the community, but for the reasons described above the Youth Offending Team has not necessarily been best placed to support these initiatives.

In response to this the strategy has a strong emphasis on the development of a prevention offer. An offer targeted at those young people identified as being involved in offending but have not received an outcome from either the courts or a disposal from the police. Often when young people are arrested the police will make a referral to the children's services 'front door'. The Youth Offending Team is exploring with

our colleagues in children's services as to how a youth offending team prevention offer can be situated within the existing assessment and referral processes.

The 1998 Crime and Disorder act identifies Youth Offending Teams as being multi agency teams through which specialist resources are targeted at preventing youth crime. The appropriate allocation of specialist resources is a challenge for a small team such as Medway. Put simply it is hard to argue a business case for the necessary specialist resources when the overall yearly caseload of the team only reaches only around 120 (2021). Since the Youth Offending Team has joined the Children's and Adults directorate in March 2021, a way forward to address this problem is emerging. This way forward involves the positioning of the Youth Offending Team within the wider adolescent offer being developed by the local authority, and the sharing of resources within that offer. The appointment of the YOT / CAMHS worker in October 2021 is the first example of this sharing of resources. Whilst the role is primarily based in the YOT, consultations and interventions are provided to the wider adolescent offer cohort. The next level of this collaboration would be the joint pooling of financial resources across the adolescent offer to address the needs identified by both the Youth Offending Team and the Adolescent Team.

Priorities and Plan:

This section presents the service business and improvement plan. It identifies our priorities, what we aim to achieve, what actions will be undertaken and what the outcome measures will be.

Support young people to realise a positive identity. Strengthen and Build Bonds, Bridges and Links between young people and the community.

Achieve:

- Support the delivery of practice that treats young people in trouble with the law as children first across the youth justice partnership.
- To develop a model of practice that incorporates and utilises the strengths and bonds that young people have with their families.
- Create accredited opportunities utilising a strengths-based model to enable young people to develop life skills, self-esteem, build confidence, independence and explore their identity and their transition to adulthood.
- Promoting the value of relationship-based identity focused practice across the local authority and wider Youth Justice sector.
- Gaining the voice of children and their families and creating a culture of collaboration.
- Promoting opportunities for young people to feel a part of and make a positive opportunity to the wider community.

Do:

- To be creative and innovative in the delivery of interventions addressing the themes of Child First practice, identity, and strengths-based approaches (Pathfinder Project and collaboration with Loughborough University).
- Develop and deliver programs to support young people's readiness, skills, and confidence in preparation for ETE, independence and transition to adulthood (in collaboration IAG team and relevant partners).
- Develop a more diverse group of panel members that reflects young people's identities.
- Develop the accreditation of young people's work with the Youth Offending Team. Recognising and celebrating their strengths and achievements.
- To review our reparation, offer to young people so that it is responsive to their strengths and interests.
- To develop community and business links to provide a range of developmental and learning experiences for young people.
- Reparation projects that enable young people to have direct contact with their community and feel that they have made a valuable contribution to it.
- Publicise and promote the positive contribution made by the young people to their communities, encouraging mutual understanding. Through means such as newsletters, a website, and engagement with councillors and local community.
- Deliver services to young people from safe non stigmatising spaces across Medway, local to their community. Facilitating opportunities for them to express themselves and feel safe and understood.
- Change the name of the service so that it no longer refers to offending and stigmatises young people.

- Utilising the police officer role to repair the relationship between young people and the police in cases where there is evidence of this having broken down. Police officer role to develop a program / intervention for young people who have committed offences of assault upon emergency workers.
- Create a regular 'drop in / one stop shop', that provides easy access for young people to ETE advice and guidance, and links to positive activities in the community (Youth Service).
- To develop a transition process, to adult Probation, that is based in the Child First principles and is supportive of developing a positive identity as a young adult.

Measure:

- Increased numbers of young people in education, employment and engaged in positive activities in the community.
- The numbers of accredited interventions being completed.
- The numbers of young people undertaking reparation / positive activities in the community who are subject to an out of court disposal.
- The numbers of young people involved in local community activities.
- Clear evidence of the agency of young people and their Carers in both their own plans and in the strategic and developmental plans of the service.
- Qualitative measures to developed to explore children's experience of working with the Youth Offending Team, increased self-esteem, value, connectedness to their communities and self-efficacy.

Work with young people and partners to create a safer community for Medway.

Achieve:

- Maximise the opportunities for Restorative practice to provide victims a voice.
- That the youth justice partnership is effectively resourced to address the risks that it manages, and the needs of the young people that it encounters.
- To take a Child First approach to working with young people to manage risk in the community and custody.

Do:

- Review operating procedures to ensure that risk management is maximised through the development of a child first approach.
- The board to undertake a review of data use and establish partnership involvement and responsibility in providing data in respect of the risks and needs in the community. For local data from the Police, VRU to be included in the quarterly performance digest.
- Work closely alongside initiatives to reduce Youth Violence, The Violence Reduction Unit, and the Serious Youth Violence.
- Develop intensive support and intervention programs for those young people assessed as being at the highest risk of re-offending and causing harm in the community.
- Develop the planning process with children so that it incorporates a clear expression of the voice of the victim / s of their offending, and that this voice is taken into account in the work undertaken with the child.
- Utilising YOT management board to understand the issues and to take joint responsibility in advocating for changes in practice and managing risk in the community.

- Using data to proactively provide management oversight of the risks and needs of the young people open to the service.
- Work with the Probation Service to identify adults with lived experience of both offending and desistance who can communicate to young people the risks of continued engagement in offending.
- Develop the use of Compliance meetings with young people, to look at how barriers to engagement can be overcome, and motivation improved, where safe and appropriate breach action can be stayed.
- To develop relationships and service level agreements with organisations that will promote and support the work of the youth offending team.
- Review the role of the Police Officer – and clarify how this role meets the national police college guidance in managing risk.
- Implement a Quality Assurance approach to include all aspects of QA including countersigning, gatekeeping, audits which can be used to identify the need for thematic reviews.
- Introduce a process that ensures inclusion of Young People and their families/carers in terms of assessed levels and planning of risk and safety and wellbeing also giving them an understanding of the rationale behind this and how they can contribute to change.
- Implement a clearer 'join up' of the various plans in place for children.
- Develop joint (Police and YOT) delivery of YC and YCC to ensure Young People and their families/carers are fully aware of the meaning of the outcome (including disclosure implications) and any involvement to follow.
- Use confidential notes on IYSS, to effectively identify and communicate sensitive risk issues.
- Deliver themed Management Board meetings. Include staff members in the management board to communicate to the board directly the issues that the team is working with.
- Identify "champions" within the team (for example for domestic abuse, SEND etc) to lead on specific areas of interest.

Measure:

- Evidence of a reduction in the risk concerns of children open to the YOT (Asset Plus risk of harm level reduced).
- Continued reduction in the use of custody.
- A reduction in the seriousness of children's re-offending.
- Increase of partnership involvements in management of risk.

Keep Young People Safe and enable them to thrive.

Achieve:

- Safeguarding children in Medway from harm and supporting them to reach their potential.
- Work with partners to develop a contextual safeguarding approach in Medway.
- Developing working practices with wider children's services to safeguard children and young people.

- Work with families to ensure young people are safe at home. Equip young people and their families with knowledge and strategies to promote personal safety.
- Improvement in the Emotional and Mental Health of Children open to the Youth Offending Team.

Do:

- Work with children and their Carers, and partnership services to effectively address concerns in respect to exploitation (criminal, and sexual).
- Ensure that multi agency meetings are formalised as part of the process to maximise efficiency in managing and addressing safeguarding concerns and supporting children to thrive.
- Align Youth Justice Planning with young people with other children's services planning,
- Provide opportunities for children and families to access individual and group parenting interventions such as NVR (Non Violent Resistance), PBS (Positive Behaviour Support) and the DICE program (Parenting intervention) that promote their being safeguarded in the family.
- Improve access to CAMHS services, consultation, assessment, and treatment, through the implementation of a YOT CAMHS worker post.
- All children with EHCP plans are identified at the point of referral and liaison takes place with the relevant SENCO to ensure that the child's needs are responded to.
- Develop closer links / a point of contact with the councils housing department to support young people more effectively with accommodation difficulties.
- Develop interventions using the support of adults with lived experience of offending and desistance, who can speak from a position of knowledge to support young people to stay safe and thrive in the community.
- Promote a model of practice based in trusted relationships and providing safe spaces for young people to feel supported, recognised by professionals and believed in.
- In collaboration with the Youth Service promote opportunities in the community for positive activities and spaces for young people.
- Work with partners in the VRU to explore local patterns and tensions to proactively safeguard young people (support the development of a focused deterrence model).
- Foster links with local education and training providers to increase ETE opportunities for young people involved in the criminal justice system.
- Implement a process to identify YOT cases known to CSC and share this with relevant CSC teams.
- Appointment of relevant specialist workers as indicated using data and regular needs assessment of the cohort
- Introduce a process that ensures inclusion of Young People and their families/carers in terms of assessed levels and planning of risk and safety and wellbeing also giving them an understanding of the rationale behind this and how they can contribute to change.
- Ensure that case recording is standardised to confirm records clearly convey the aim of the planned session progress made against the plan and allow for reflection to be captured.

Measure:

- Evidence of a reduction in the safeguarding concerns of children open to the YOT (Asset Plus Safety and Well-being level reduced, Exploitation screening, evidence of YOT contributing to children being 'stepped down' by wider children's services).
- Implementation of a new planning process and document to effectively collaborate and share plans with families and support networks.

- Evidence of the involvement of children and their families in planning, safeguarding and risk discussions.
- Evidence from children's voice- feedback from children and families about their experiences – specifically in relation to their feeling safe.
- Improvement in assessed emotional and mental health of children open to the YOT.
- The service as appropriate links to specialist services as identified through needs analysis.
- Safeguarding Partnership board data set, evidencing the YOTs effective involvement in wider safeguarding processes.

Prevent Young people from entering the Youth Justice System.

Achieve:

- Ensure that diversion from the criminal justice system is the first outcome considered for children in Medway.
- Increase partnership work with other agencies to specifically develop a YOT prevention offer within Children's services.
- Maximise engagement through innovative, relationship-based practice and the use of digital technologies.

Do:

- Create a process to Identify the siblings of young people in the criminal justice system who are at risk themselves of offending. Develop interventions, to prevent their involvement in offending.
- Work with partners to develop prevention pathways. With the Police - Outcome 22 (diversionary Offer), and Informal Community Resolutions. With children's services to develop a criteria for prevention referrals, from the 'front door' and / or 'step down' .
- Develop Family / Parenting support offer within the Youth Offending Team and signposting to partner agency services.
- Youth service manager to be invited to join the Youth Justice partnership Board to have oversight of Youth Services Crime Prevention activity.
- Develop link between Youth Service diversionary activities and diversionary out of court disposals
- Work within children's services to develop a Contextual Safeguarding Approach to preventing young people from involvement in offending.
- Develop YOT Voluntary category of Intervention. Include Voluntary Intervention as an intervention type to allow all recording to be against this rather than against the previous order the young person was subject to. Define the voluntary offer and develop a clear 'exit' strategy.
- Contribute prevention intervention to the PSHE curriculum for the Pupil Referral units in Medway.
- Develop the identification of appropriate prevention work through the CJLADS service.
- Explore how the implementation of digital technology can promote and support engagement with children and families.

Measure:

- Reduction in the number of first-time entrants.

- The numbers of siblings who access a prevention intervention.
- The numbers of young people accessing the YOT prevention offer, including the number of young people who receive a YOT intervention in conjunction with the police having delivered an Outcome 22 or an Informal Community Resolution.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Priorities and themes:

This table cross references the Priorities (Achieve) and the work themes outlines in the governance section of this strategy. The purpose of this table is to provide a quick reference point as to how the work themes deliver the priorities for children in the community. These work themes enable the Medway Youth Justice partnership board to have effective oversight of the delivery of this strategy.

Appendix 2: Consultation:

This appendix outlines the process of collaboration with young people, staff and the partner agencies that led to the development of this strategy.

Vision statement:

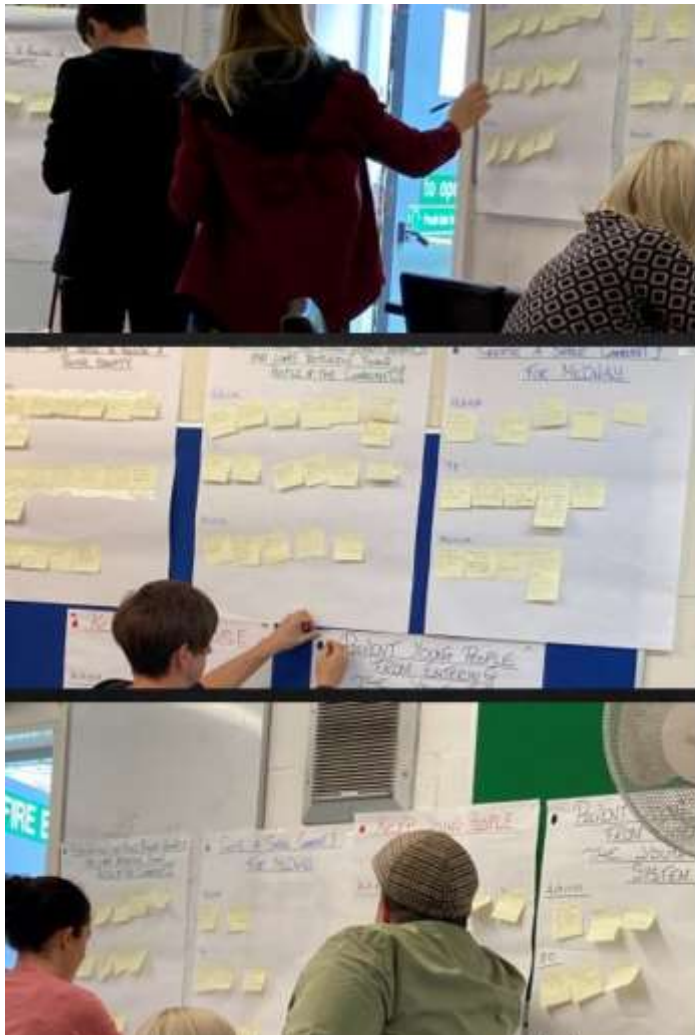
Medway Youth Offending Team aims to achieve the best for the children and young people that we work with.

We aim to get the best out of young people and for them to be able to contribute positively to the community.

We aim to provide opportunities for young people to find the best in themselves.

<p style="text-align: center;">Priorities</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Themes</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Support young people to realise a positive identity. Strengthen and build bonds bridges and links between young people and the community.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Work with young people and partners to create a safer community for Medway.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Keep young people safe and enable them to thrive.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Prevent young people from entering the youth justice system.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Child First</p>	<p>Support the delivery of practice that treats young people in trouble with the law as children first across the youth justice partnership.</p> <p>To develop a model of practice that incorporates and utilises the strengths and bonds that young people have with their families.</p> <p>Create accredited opportunities utilising a strengths-based model to enable young people to develop life skills, self-esteem, build confidence, independence <u>and</u> explore their identity and their transition to adulthood.</p> <p>Promoting the value of relationship-based identity focused practice across the local authority and wider Youth Justice sector.</p> <p>Gaining the voice of children and their families and creating a culture of collaboration.</p> <p>Promoting opportunities for young people to feel a part of and make a positive opportunity to the wider community.</p>	<p>To take a Child First approach to working with young people to manage risk in the community and custody</p>	<p>Work with families to ensure young people are safe at home. Equip young people and their families with knowledge and strategies to promote personal safety.</p>	<p>Ensure that diversion from the criminal justice system is the first outcome considered for children in Medway.</p> <p>Increase partnership work with other agencies to specifically develop a YOT prevention offer within Children's services.</p> <p>Maximise engagement through innovative, relationship-based practice and the use of digital technologies.</p>

<p>Priorities</p> <p>Themes</p>	<p>Support young people to realise a positive identity. Strengthen and build bonds bridges and links between young people and the community.</p>	<p>Work with young people and partners to create a safer community for Medway.</p>	<p>Keep young people safe and enable them to thrive.</p>	<p>Prevent young people from entering the youth justice system.</p>
<p>Partnerships, collaboration, and resourcing</p>	<p>Promoting the value of relationship-based identity focused practice across the local authority and wider Youth Justice sector.</p>	<p>That the youth justice partnership is effectively resourced to address the risks that it manages, and the needs of the young people that it encounters.</p>	<p>Work with partners to develop a contextual safeguarding approach in Medway. Developing working practices with wider children's services to safeguard children and young people. Improvement in the Emotional and Mental Health of Children open to the Youth Offending Team.</p>	<p>Ensure that diversion from the criminal justice system is the first outcome considered for children in Medway. Increase partnership work with other agencies to specifically develop a YOT prevention offer within Children's services.</p>
<p>Quality of Practice</p>	<p>To develop a model of practice that incorporates and utilises the strengths and bonds that young people have with their families.</p>	<p>Maximise the opportunities for Restorative practice to provide victims a voice.</p>	<p>Work with partners to develop a contextual safeguarding approach in Medway. Developing working practices with wider children's services to safeguard children and young people. Work with families to ensure young people are safe at home. Equip young people and their families with knowledge and strategies to promote personal safety.</p>	<p>Increase partnership work with other agencies to specifically develop a YOT prevention offer within Children's services.</p>
<p>Prevention, diversion and first responses</p>	<p>Support the delivery of practice that treats young people in trouble with the law as children first across the youth justice partnership. Promoting opportunities for young people to feel a part of and make a positive opportunity to the wider community.</p>	<p>To take a Child First approach to working with young people to manage risk in the community and custody.</p>	<p>Work with partners to develop a contextual safeguarding approach in Medway. Work with families to ensure young people are safe at home. Equip young people and their families with knowledge and strategies to promote personal safety.</p>	<p>Ensure that diversion from the criminal justice system is the first outcome considered for children in Medway. Increase partnership work with other agencies to specifically develop a YOT prevention offer within Children's services. Maximise engagement through innovative, relationship-based practice and the use of digital technologies.</p>



Appendix 2: Consultation.

The third principle of Child First practice emphasizes the importance of collaboration with children.

The preparation of this strategy is based on collaboration with Children. A consultation with children took place over a period of four months (July –October 2021). 39 children took part in this consultation. Over 50 of their suggestions and comments have been incorporated in the actions presented in this strategy.

A staff consultation took place over the same period, as well as separate consultation events with the Youth Justice Partnership Board members and councilors.

It is the aim of this strategy to build in ongoing collaboration and consultation in the delivery and development of this plan.

The following pages present a selection of the responses of children to this consultation.

How do you feel after you've had a meeting with the youth justice team?

Young people were asked what adjectives would they use to describe how they feel after they have had a meeting with the youth Justice Team.

The most commonly used adjective was 'Supported' (10), the other adjectives in the diagram were all used by 9 young people, and 'Enthusiastic' by 8.



What is your experience of being with the youth justice team? For example, the things you particularly like about it, or what you think is missing or could work better.



- To be able to **talk to someone and be listened to** (*having a voice/being heard*)
- Receiving a **warm, welcoming, caring** response (*themselves and family*)
- Feeling they were in a **safe, non-judgemental space** where they could be themselves, **offload and be able to think things through**
- The YJ worker was **helpful, supportive** (*provided advocacy*)
- The YJ worker was able to **communicate** with the child at their own **individual level**

Support young people realise a positive identity:

- Positive activities and utilise what space and facilities are in the centre such as the sports hall, garden, music studio and pool tables.
- Having the space to talk – I now feel happier and more confident.
- Get young people into activities that are positive and motivate them i.e. boxing – these can be rewarding I feel that more training that is based at the YOT office would help me build a positive identity.
- I would like to do my CSCS card at the YOT office because I don't want to go anywhere else. If this could be provided then I would attend it.
- Get young people to stop wanting to be the number one guy all the time as this gets you into trouble with other people

Change of name. Because if I were to say "I have to go to a meeting at the youth offending team" it instantly criminalises me.

Strengthen and build, bonds, bridges and links between young people and the community:

- I think being young is a lot more different because of how modernised things are and this has caused a split as older people cannot understand or relate to younger people. Need to talk to each other to help better explain and understand things from both sides. Stop judging young people for how they dress, look and speak- create spaces for young and old to talk and try to understand each other better.
- Police to gain a better understanding of young peoples positives rather than the negatives. Understand what's going on for the young person at that time. Community activities such as a Community vs Police football match to help build bridges between community and Police.
- Links need to be built between young people and the Police / PCSO's opening up a dialogue between Police / PCSOs and young people.
- More jobs for young people.
- Young people fall under a bad shadow by the community and get stereotypes as just being 'trouble'. This has caused young people to create their own community which has caused a divide, which is a shame as young people could help vulnerable people in the community, such as helping do chores they cannot do themselves and help build respect.

Create a safe community for Medway:

Assessment is technology that tracks the amount of time you spend watching BBC 3 when asked how you can make your car and have a gun in your hand in 40 mins. This is more of an issue in cities like London, Manchester and Liverpool and not really in an issue in Medway.

Local updates and more awareness around everything including guns, weapons, drugs, gangs etc. Community need to apply more pressure to the police to take more of a preventative approach. You can use social content to increase awareness as this will have wider reach but also creating spaces where people have been through it and share out the more able to talk to people in the community, including using people to help them better understand.

Less time from police to avoid petty crimes and more on the big, organized or serious, as this will have greater impact. But to be top down rather than bottom up. Otherwise, you get young people more at risk of being and creating more crime.

They need to get rid of issues. They need to have more stop and search. The police need to be better at identifying people that carry weapons. If there were more YOT support then people might find their beliefs in what's that worst when you have a belief in England's football team, an amazing history with no questions asked. Money talks in police.

Better relationships with the police and young people because we don't feel like they are there to protect us. We feel like they are against us and we won't ask them if we need help. Having more police won't make us better having better police that treat us like humans will.

Reduce that area so that's where people are the most unsafe and where most of the beef happens.

Keep young people safe:

Young people having safe space to come to and be able to talk to someone they can trust. It has massively benefited me; don't think I would have been able to start college as easy and have the confidence I do.

- More talks at school where they get guest speakers, such as ex-gang leaders talking about the realities and risks of that lifestyle.
- It is really hard to stop young people to get involved in crime- perhaps having someone who has lived it talk to them might help them understand and give them a serious reality check. They need to understand death could be a serious consequence.
- Young people need positive things to do in the community.
- Stop putting kids in houses miles away from home. They need to be stable, stop placements from breaking down all the time, it doesn't feel safe keep moving from area to area.
- I don't think that you can keep young people safe. Maybe the stop and search thing would help.
- Help young people to look after their money so they don't get in fights over it or need to deal drugs to pay for things.
- Find ways to stop beef and conflict but I don't think this could ever happen, there is always going to be beef over money and girls.
- Keep them off the streets, more opportunities, get more up to college, have more things to do like the wrec.

Prevent young people from entering the youth justice system:

Reaching out to young people before they enter the system... more support for parents, support through mates/peers who are a positive influence and mentoring services that can go into schools and colleges and talk and support young people. Less punishments such as detentions and exclusions as these do not work but provide more opportunities to help young people make things better and understand what is going on for themselves and be led by someone, including the police and teachers. Young people to have the opportunity to work directly with the police to make things better.

What needs to be done? For my voice to be heard around my what's going on in my life and so be listened to. How this is to be done: to make sure information is correct by confirming with me all information shared. Allowing me to talk, understanding and not judging me. Share with other professionals working with me. Support me with areas I struggle with. How to measure success: For me to attend my YOT sessions and engage well throughout sharing my views, talking openly and having trust in my YOT worker. For me to feel as if I have a purpose in my YOT sessions.

By having things for teenagers like mentoring services, get in early when kids are struggling to help them keep on track. Work with schools to help lower exclusions because that is when kids get into trouble. More activities for teenage kids in the community. More hobbies, having help people find what they are good at, keep people busy and it helps to talk about things. Work needs to be done in schools and colleges with young people, focusing on social motivation.

I was in the wrong place at the wrong time and that got me into trouble and referred to YOT More things that will stop us getting bored so we don't go to the wrong places.

Make rules for police not to for black young people, violate us, stop and search.